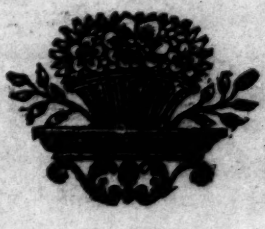
THE

SUNDAY-PEASANT.

A

POEM.

Hâc Iter Elyſium.—— VIRG.



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PREFACE.

THE following Lines make no other Pretenſions to Merit of any Kind, than what they derive from the Matter, and, in ſome Paſſages, from the expreſs Words of the Sacred Writings.

WHEN our Lord meeting two of his Diſciples going to *Emmaus*, had explained unto them the Law and the Prophets, after he had left them, they ſaid one to another, *Did not our Hearts burn within us, while he opened unto us the Scriptures?* We ſtill to our great Comfort, have the ſame Divine Perſon, ſpeaking to us in the Language of the Goſpel; and if unhappily, with leſs Effect, we muſt ſearch for the Cauſe not elſewhere, than in the Hardneſs of our own Hearts.

Let there be Light, and there was Light, are Words truly expreſſive the Omnipotence of that great Being that utter'd them; and as ſuch, are cited by

Longinus in his Treatiſe of the Sublime. It were to be wiſhed that many of our modern Readers, ſhar'd in the Taſte and Candour of this great Critic, tho' a Heathen. They might then find, wherever the Subject required, the like Sublime runing thro' the whole Body of the ſacred Writings: And that the Deity, however condeſcending to the Capacities of Men, has at all Times ſpoke to them in Terms becoming the Dignity of Divine Majeſty.

THE Author has only to add, that his Subject has lead him into Particulars, which the Reader would ſcarce expect, from the Title of the Poem; and that the References to the ſacred Text are to be found at the Bottom of the Pages that follow.

THE

THE

SUNDAY-PEASANT.

DISPERS'D the ſhades of ſilent Night, now tolls
The early matin Bell, that uſhers in
The Day of Reſt, the ſacred feſtal Morn.
Glad Reſpite from his Toils, the lab'ring Hind
Refreſh'd injoys; his ſix Days weary Toil,
Which daily rous'd him 'ere the Morning's Dawn.
Leſs niggard to his Reſt, till ceaſe the Bells
Indulges he repoſe, *ſore Labour*'s Bath.
Beſtirs him then —— Not to the furrow'd Soil,
To tend the Plow, or drive the tinkl'ing Team;
But where on ſacred Ground the hallow'd Pile
Aſpires, thither he plies with pious ſpeed;
No longer now in Garb and ſqualid hue
The Savage of the Field; but neat and trim,
In clean tho' homely Weeds, a poliſh'd Villager.

With

With wintry Horrors clad, thus Nature mourns,
While Rains and fleeting Snows deform the Year;
But Spring return'd, the feather'd Warblers ſing,
With Leaves the Trees, with Flow'rs the Fields are deck'd,
And Earth reviv'd in vernal Beauty blooms.
Nor leſs bedight and trim the Matrons grave,
And Virgin Nymphs, blooming with artleſs Charms.

While toll the Bells, th' aſſembl'd Swains confer
How ſprings the Grain, what promiſes the Crop:
How thrive the lowing, and the bleating Breed,
How Seaſons cheer, or damp the Farmer's Hopes.
Thee, — Univerſal Lord, at whoſe Command,
The fruitful Seaſons ſmile, or blaſting low'r,
Parent of Good, whate'er befals, they bleſs.

Now ceaſe the warning Bells; the ſacred Dome
Fills with the rural Throng. — The white rob'd Prieſt
Appears. — Suſpended ſtands the ſacred Rites,
'Till in parochial Pomp with ſolemn pace
Thro' the collected Crowd of Tenant Homagers,
Enters the Squire: — The firſt that ſhou'd appear
(Shame to the Great) in * Houſe of Prayer the laſt.
Ye that receive the Homage of the Swains,
Lords of the Soil; ye Swains whoſe Toils ſubdue

The

* Mat. Ch. 21. v. 13.

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The ſtubborn Field; bend each the ſuppliant Knee;
With [b] reverential Fear, with pious awe,
Devoutly join the fervent humble Prayer.
The wand'ring Eye, the roving Thought reſtrain,
And guard your Hearts 'gainſt Beauty's pow'rful Glance.
So ſhall your Prayer to Heaven's high Gate aſcend,
And [c] Rain and Sun-ſhine bleſs the fruitful Year.

THE publick Oraizons now done, each home
Inſtructed hies. The cleanly Cottage ſmiles;
With coarſe but wholeſome Cheer, the Swains regale.
Ye pamper'd Sons of Luxury that range
The ſpacious Dome; ye Sons of Eaſe reflect,
How falſe your Joys, how vain ſuperfluous Wealth.
In lab'ring Toils, the humble Peaſant finds
Health, Appetite, Content, and ſweet Repoſe,
In coſtly Viands and in Beds of Down
Sought oft in vain. —— Now tolls the Veſper Bell,
His Ev'ning Sacrifice of Pray'r the Swain
Neglects not. Lo! in orderly Array,
A little Troop, a Male and Female Band
Of Catechumens rang'd. In feeble Voice
Of different Tone, reſponſive they repeat
Leſſons of ſaving Health to Young and Old.

WHEN

[b] Mat. Ch. 5. v. 45. [c] Pſalm 2. v. 11.

When home return'd, and Evening Shades deſcend
Nor wanton Mirth, nor Licence diſſolute
The ſober Swain allows. The ſacred Page
Peruſes he intent. The ſummon'd Family
Give Audience due. Inſtructed there he learns,
How from the deep Abyſs, the [d] formleſs Void,
Firſt dawn'd [e] glad Light, *Offspring of Heaven firſt born.*
How Sun and Moon, the Earth and ſtary Hoſt
Sprung forth obedient to th' Omnific Word.
How Heav'n's inlivening Breath [f], the ſenſeleſs Clay
With Conſcious Thought, with reaſoning Soul inform'd;
And Man in Form erect, in Eye ſublime,
The [g] Image of his glorious Maker ſhone.
In the firſt [h] Man how all Men ſinn'd and dy'd,
How in one greater, all Men live reſtor'd.
The [i] Promiſe to the faithful Patriarch given,
That in his Seed all Nations ſhould be bleſs'd.

From

[d] Gen. Ch. 1. v. 2. [e] Gen. Ch. 1. v. 3. 16. [f] Gen. Ch. 2. v. 7. [g] Gen. Ch. 1. v. 26. [h] 1 Cor. Ch. 15. v. 22. [i] Gen. Ch. 22. v. 16, 17, 18.

FROM ſhadowy Types obſcure, the * Day-ſpring breaks
The Goſpel's heavenly Dawn — Heav'n's high Beheſts
An [l] Angel to the ſimple Shepherds bears,
Glad Tidings to the World —— A Saviour born.
Strait an [m] angelic Band with loud Acclaim
Joyful Hoſannas ſing —— [n] to Men good-will,
Peace to the Earth, Glory to Heav'n's ſupreme.
To the [o] benighted Sons of *Zembla* thus,
(Where never melting Snows to Mountains riſe)
After a ſix Months diſmal-during Gloom,
The wiſh'd for Sun with radiant Luſtre ſhines.
As long a Day as erſt a doleful Night,
[p] His welcome Beams reſtore —— when cheer'd with Light,
And from the Cavern's dark Abode ſet free,
O'er ſnowy Waſtes the roving Savage bounds,
And joys exulting in the new-born Day.

BUT ſee! the Pow'rs of [q] Sin and Death o'ercome,
Th' impriſon'd Tenant of the Grave ſet free,

* Luk. Ch. 1. v. 78. [l] Luk. Ch. 2. v. 8, 9, 11. [m] Luk. Ch. 1. v. 13, 14. [n] Mat. Ch. 4. v. 16. Iſai. Ch. 9. v. 2. [o] 1 Cor. Ch. 15. v. 26, 55. [p] Or thus,—*Change grateful now prevails.* [q] Mat. Ch. 27. 51. Luk. Ch. 23 v. 44, 45.

The Saviour of Mankind triumphant riſe,
With [s] thund'ring Peals convuls'd, the [t] trembling Earth
Affrighted ſhrinks —— wrapt in its cold Embrace
The rifted Sepulcher reſigns its Charge.
Array'd in ſplendid [u] White, two radiant Forms,
Angels, (ſo charg'd,) [w] roll back the pond'rous Stone,
With Terror ſcar'd, dazl'd their vanquiſh'd Sight,
The ſwooning Guards, like breathleſs Coarſes fall.
From their enervate Hands their maſſy Arms,
The Shield and idle Spear inactive drop.
Now own, ye faithleſs Race, the Pow'rs of Heav'n;
The Son, on whom th' eternal Father [x] ſmiles
(Grim Death ſubdu'd, his Iron Gates unbarr'd)
Victorious riſes to eternal Life.
Ye Subjects of the ſilent Grave, awake,
Awake, to ſleep no more —— Your Saviour lives,
The guiltleſs Victim of miſguided Rage
Lives, the Firſt-fruits become of thoſe that ſleep.

Now o'er his natal Acres tread thoſe Feet,
That nailed to the Croſs, with purple Streams
For Sinners bled. In Perſon he appears.

Th'

[s] Mat. Ch. 28. v. 2, 3, 4, 7. [t] Mar. Ch. 16. v. 2, 4, 5, Luk. Ch. 24. v. 2, 4. Joh. Ch. 20. v. 12. [u] Mat. Ch. 28. v. 2. [w] Mat. Ch. 27. from v. 62. to v. 66. Mat. Ch. 27. v. 54. Mat. Ch. 28. v. 11, 12, 13. [x] 1 Cor. 15. Ch. from v. 3. to v. 8.

Th' aſtoniſh'd [x] Multitude around him gaze,
With wond'ring Eyes th' Apoſtle ſees —— He ſees,
Yet doubts, till palpable to Senſe, his Hand
(Thruſt where the wounding Spear his Side had pierc'd)
Feels the Conviction which his Eyes refus'd.

His apoſtolic Delegates of Pow'r,
Commiſſion'd now, receive their ſacred [z] Charge,
T' inſtruct, baptize, reclaim a ſinful World.
When lo! beyond the Ken of mortal Eye,
Or Eagle's ſoaring Flight, 'twixt Worlds and Worlds,
Amid the Sons of Light, angelic Bands,
The God [b] aſcending, ſeeks his natal Skies.
Him to receive, Heav'n's Portals open wide.
Him all the Sanctities of Heav'n proclaim
The Son, on whom Belov'd the Father ſmiles;
The Son, victorious o'er his rebel Foes,
Th' inſidious Fiend, Hell and th' inſatiate Grave.

Ye Sons of Men, with heav'nly Choirs rejoice;
At the [c] right Hand of Majeſty divine

The

[x] Joh. Ch. 20. from v. 24. to v. 29. [y] Mat. Ch. 3. v. 17. [z] Mat. Ch. 28. v. 19. [a] Mar. Ch. 16. v. 19. Luk. Ch. 24. v. 25. [b] 1 Tim. Ch. 2. v. 5. [c] Mar. Ch. 16. v. 19. Luk. Ch. 24. v. 25.

Your great Redeemer sits; yet still whole deigns
(Sole Mediator at the Throne of Grace)
For Sinners penitent to intercede.

THE Day thus clos'd, the Swain to Rest repairs,
Then with the Morning Lark renews his Toil.

1 Tim. Ch. 2. v. 5.

FINIS.